

his perception. Repeatedly, like Martin, he denies what he has created. Unlike Martin, he continues to create. The negations, incorporated into the finished constructs, serve to enrich them. "Martin," with ridicule as its weapon, destruction as its aim, attacks the author, his critics and admirers, and his achievements. But the aesthetic expression of these negative goals remains as one of Le Clézio's most felicitous fictions.

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NOTES

¹Paris: Gallimard, 1965. All page references are to this edition; the translations are our own.

On Lino Novás Calvo and His *Maneras de contar*

Lino Novás Calvo is Cuba's most distinguished writer of short stories. He began his literary career in the twenties by publishing in the Cuban vanguardist journal the *Revista de Avance* (1927-1930) and he still is actively writing. Novas Calvo is mainly responsible for the formation of a modern tradition in the Cuban short story, and his works reveal the universal characteristics that exist behind the masks of regionalistic peculiarities. Novas Calvo also has proven to be a perceptive critic and readers of *The International Fiction Review* may be interested in knowing that he was among the first to recognize the merits of William Faulkner's works. An article of his on Faulkner appeared in the January 1933 issue of Spain's prestigious journal the *Revista de Occidente* which was edited by Ortega y Gasset. It is the earliest study of Faulkner that this writer knows of in Spanish. Novas Calvo has maintained an active interest in U. S. fiction throughout his career and he has been on cordial terms with writers such as Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway. Recently he has been fascinated by the works of Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

Novás Calvo was the first Cuban writer to incorporate popular language into his work successfully. In his hands everyday language achieves a creative dimension that transcends any regionalistic peculiarities. One can see in Cuban fiction of the early nineteen-thirties a movement away from regionalistic preoccupations and a noticeable increase of interest in experimental fiction. Novás Calvo's publication of three major stories in 1932 in the *Revista de Occidente* and the appearance of novels by Alejo Carpentier and Enrique Labrador Ruiz in 1933 mark this significant change. This did not signal an abandonment of their own culture but rather an attempt to identify characteristics common to all men. In this respect, the works of these writers represent a movement away from the limitations of time and space.

Many of Novás Calvo's stories are first person narrations related by individuals who often do not comprehend the significance of what is happening to them. His stories frequently present individuals trapped by circumstances they cannot control and they resort to all types of psychological distortions in attempting to deal with the terror in their lives. Novás's characters are often stripped of civilized behavior as they become dominated by their emotions in their struggles to overcome adverse circumstances. His stories examine the fringes of irrationality and this explains the numerous fantastic occurrences that take place in his works. The language of his stories has a spontaneous and natural quality that captivates the reader and his first person narrations have a confessional quality that intensifies the intimacy they convey.

Maneras de contar (New York: Las Américas, 1970), contains eighteen stories published between 1931 and 1969 although works written since Novás Calvo's departure from Cuba in 1960 predominate. His purpose in compiling this anthology was to present the reader with different manners of narration. That is, he was more concerned with exposing his reader to a variety of narrative modes than presenting a representative anthology of his work. Actually, the volume fulfills both purposes although anyone who knows Novás Calvo's work will undoubtedly find some favorite stories omitted. Some exceptional stories not included are "Un dedo encima" which won Cuba's Hernández Catá prize for the short story in 1942, " 'Aliados' y 'Alemanes' " and "La visión de Tamaría." His most important collection of short stories *La luna nona y otros cuentos* (1942) has long been out of print. However, if one combines *Maneras de contar* with *Cayo Canas* (Espasa Calpe, 1946) one will have a fairly complete representation of Novás Calvo's writings.

Several of the stories in *Maneras de contar* deal with different aspects of the Cuban Revolution. They concern the injustices that are committed when men resort to violence to resolve their problems and the theme of vengeance appears frequently. In "Fernández al paredón" the desire for revenge becomes a blind force that destroys friend and foe alike. In this case a son unknowingly participates in his own father's execution. The message seems clear enough—when a man kills others a part of his own intimate being also dies. The illogical course of human events has always interested Novás Calvo. One of the earlier stories in this volume "La noche de Ramón Yendía" uses the fall of the Machado government in 1933 as the setting for an individual's journey toward death. In this case, a taxicab driver unwittingly provokes his own end by allowing feelings of guilt and fear to overwhelm him. Although Novás Calvo's stories often present protagonists who are trapped by unfortunate circumstances, the works focus on the choices that the characters make rather than the situations. In this respect, his stories reflect aspects of existential thought rather than the determinism one associates with naturalism.

Maneras de contar is a welcome addition to Novás Calvo's publications. It contains stories that have never been published in book form and many of them were for all practical purposes inaccessible to most readers. He is the most significant storyteller that Cuba has produced and one of Spanish America's leading practitioners of the short story.

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